

*On the Immediate Repayments of Good and Evil in Return
for a Vow to Copy the Dai hannya-kyō and for the Use
of the Temple Property¹*

Ōtomo no muraji Oshikatsu 大伴連忍勝² came from the village of Omuna, Chisagata district, Shinano province 信濃國小縣郡嬬里.³ The Ōtomo-no muraji family got together and built a hall in the village to serve as the family temple.⁴ Because Oshikatsu wanted to copy the *Dai hannya-kyō* 大般若經,⁵ he made a vow and collected donations. Having shaved his head and face, put on a surplice, and received the precepts, he lived in the temple, practicing the path.

In the third month in the spring of the first year of the tiger, the fifth year of the Hōki era,⁶ he was accused of a crime and beaten to death by the patrons⁷ of the temple. (The patrons were of the same family⁸ as Oshikatsu.) This family conferred and said, "Since murder is involved, we will wait for a judgment." Accordingly they did not cremate him on the spot but made a tomb and arranged the corpse for a temporary burial. After five days, however, he was restored to life, and told this story to his family:

"Five messengers accompanied me and made me hurry along. Ahead of us there was a very steep slope. Having reached the top of the slope, I stopped to look around and saw three broad paths. The first was flat and wide, the second covered with grass, and the third blocked with thick bushes. In the center of the three-forked road⁹ a king was seated, to whom the messengers spoke, saying, 'We have brought him.' Pointing to the flat path, he said to them, 'Take him this way.' Surrounding me, the king's messengers went on that path.

"At the end of the way, there was a big kettle. The steam rose from it like a sheet of flame, and the water boiled with the thunderous

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XIV, 30).

2. Unknown. For the Ōtomo no muraji family, see I.5, n. 2.

3. Present Ueda-shi, Nagano-ken 長野縣 上田市.

4. 氏寺 *uji-dera*; see Chap. I(1)d.

5. *Maka hannya haramita-kyō* (*Taishō*, VIII, No. 223) or *Dai hannya haramita-kyō*, 600 vols. (*Taishō*, V, VI, VII, No. 220).

6. 774, in the reign of Emperor Kōnin.

7. 檀越 *taniochi*.

8. 氏 *uji*; see Chap. I(1)d, n. 112.

9. See III.33, n. 7.

roar of breaking waves. But when they threw me into it alive, the kettle turned cold and broke into four pieces.

"Three monks came out then, and asked me, 'What good have you done?' I answered, 'I haven't practiced any good, but I made a vow once to copy six hundred volumes of the *Dai hannya-kyō*, although I haven't fulfilled it yet.' Then they took out three iron tablets¹⁰ for checking and said to me, 'It is true that you made a vow and renounced the world to practice the way. In spite of those good deeds you brought destruction on yourself by using property belonging to the temple. Now, go back to fulfill the vow and atone for the loss of the temple property.' Suddenly released, I came back by the three-forked broad way, coming down the slope, and I realized at once I had been restored to life. I incurred this karmic retribution because of the effort shown in making the vow and because of my use of temple property, and hell has nothing to be blamed for."

This is what the *Dai hannya-kyō*¹¹ means when it says: "One *mon*, if multiplied for twenty days, will make 1,740,003,968 *mon*."¹² Therefore, don't steal or use even one *mon*."

*On Being Born as a Monkey for Keeping Men from
Seeking the Way¹*

On the mountain named Mikamu-no-take, in Yasu district, Ōmi province 近江國野州郡御上嶺,² there was a shrine called the abode of Taga no Ōkami 鵜我大神.³ It was endowed with six families' holdings as its private property. Near the shrine there was a temple.

During the Hōki era,⁴ in the reign of Emperor Shirakabe, the Venerable Eshō 惠勝⁵ of Daian-ji was staying at the temple for a

10. See III.22, n. 8.

11. Unlocated.

12. This calculation does not seem to be correct since it amounts to 524,288 on the twentieth day, and 536,870,912 on the thirtieth day, which is the reading in the Maeda manuscript.

1. Cf. *Fusō ryakki* (Shō II, Kōnin), *Genkō shakusho* (IX).

2. Or Mikami-yama 三上山, Ōmi Fuji 近江富士, located in present Yasu-chō, Yasu-gun, Shiga-ken.

3. Taga Shrine located in present Taga-chō, Inukami-gun, Shiga-ken 滋賀縣犬上郡多賀町, although Izanagi and Izanami are enshrined now.

4. (770-780).

5. Unknown.

retreat when he had a dream in which a man appeared, saying, "Please read the scriptures for me." When he awoke from his sleep, he wondered about the dream.

The next day a tiny white monkey appeared and came to him, saying, "Stay at this temple and recite the *Hoke-kyō* for me." The monk asked the monkey, "Who are you?" Whereupon the monkey replied, "I was the king of a state in the eastern part of India. In my state about one thousand men (it means about one thousand and not thousands)⁶ became followers of monks, neglecting agricultural matters. Therefore, I suppressed them, saying, 'There should not be so many followers.' At that time I limited the number of followers, but not the acts carried out in pursuit of the path. Even if I did not suppress the practice of the teaching, however, to prevent men from following monks was a sin. This is why I was reborn as a monkey and the kami of this shrine. Please stay here and recite the *Hoke-kyō* so that I may be released from this life."⁷

The monk said, "Then you must make offerings." The monkey answered, "I have nothing to offer." To which the monk replied, "In this village there is a lot of unhulled rice. Give the rice to me as an offering so that I may recite the scripture." The monkey said, "Though the government officials gave the rice to me, the person in charge of it regards it as his own and would never let me have it for my use." ('A person in charge of it' means the priest at the shrine.) The monk said, "How can I recite the scripture without any offering?" The monkey answered, "In that case I will join a group of several monks in Asai district 淺井郡⁸ who are going to read the *Rokkan-shō* 六卷抄."⁹ (Asai district is in the same province. The *Rokkan-shō* is the title of the preceptual writing.)

This monk, in wonder and doubt, went to the Venerable Manyō 滿預¹⁰ of Yamashina-dera 山階寺,¹¹ who was a patron, and told him what the monkey had asked. The latter, disbelieving it, said, "These are merely the words of a monkey. I do not believe what you say. Nor will I accept nor admit the monkey into the group."

6. Kyōkai's note.

7. The idea that a kami is a sentient being and needs to hear dharma to be saved is well exemplified in this story. For its significance in Japanese religious history, see Chap. I(1)d.

8. Present Higashi-Azai-gun and Iga-gun, Shiga-ken 滋賀縣 伊賀郡, 東淺井郡.

9. *Shibunritsu sanhan hoketsu gyōji-shō* 四分律刪繁補闕行事抄 (*Taishō*, XL, No. 1804, 1-156), edited by Tao-hsüan 道宣.

10. Unknown. He seems to have been a monk of Yamashina-dera and at the same time a patron of the temple in Ōmi, where he was invited to lecture on the *Rokkan-shō*.

11. Fujiwara no Kamatari founded it in Yamashina in 669, and it was later transferred to the new capital of Nara in 710, where it was renamed Kōfuku-ji 興福寺.

When he was preparing for the recitation of the *Rokkan-shō*, an acolyte and a lay brother came to him in haste, saying, "There was a tiny white monkey at the hall. Then we saw the great hall eighteen yards long¹² fall down in pieces, along with all the Buddha images and residential quarters." He went out to discover that all had been destroyed as reported. Thereupon, Manyō conferred with Eshō, built a hall fourteen yards long,¹³ and, believing the words of the monkey which revealed him as the Great Kami of Taga, accepted the monkey among the audience for the recitation of the *Rokkan-shō* according to the request of the Great Kami. From that time until the vow was fulfilled, there was never any trouble.

Those who keep men from practicing good are penalized by being reborn as a monkey. Therefore, you must not prevent monks from telling followers to hold services, for you will be penalized.

When Rahula was a king in his previous existence, he prevented a self-enlightened monk¹⁴ from begging. As the latter could not enter the former's kingdom, he was hungry for seven days. Owing to this sin Rahula had to stay in his mother's womb for six years before his next birth.¹⁵ This story teaches us the same lesson.

25

*On Being Saved by Reciting the Name of Śākyamuni Buddha While Drifting on the Ocean*¹

Ki no omi Umakai 紀臣馬養² was a man³ from the village of Kibi, Ate district, Kii province 紀伊國安諦郡吉備郷.⁴ Nakatomi no muraji Ojimarō 中臣連祖父麿⁵ was a boy⁶ from the village of Hamanaka,

12. 九間大堂; since one *ken* is about two yards, nine *ken* is eighteen yards. *Ken* is a basic unit in Japanese architecture, and the size of the hall often becomes its name such as 三十三間堂, Thirty-three *ken* Hall.

13. 七間堂.

14. 獨覺.

15. *Daichido-ron*, XXVIII (*Taishō*, XXV, 182).

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XII, 14).

2. The Ki family is listed in the *Shinsen shōjiroku* as one descended from the imperial family; residents of Kii province.

3. 長男 *chōnan* may mean 'T', men from twenty-one to sixty (see *Ryō no gige*, "Ko-ryō," Article 6).

4. Present Kibi-chō, Arida-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣有田郡吉備町.

5. The Nakatomi family is a priestly family which traditionally served the kami. The powerful Fujiwara was a branch of this family.

6. 小男 *shōnan* is a boy between four and six (cf. n. 3, above).